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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: APRIL 16, 2009

Summary: Reports of a suicide attack at a police check-post in Charsadda (NWFP) killing 16 people including nine personnel dominated headlines in all newspapers on Thursday. President Zardari's statement that the "government may review the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation 2009, if peace is not restored in Swat" received front-page display. Several major newspapers highlighted remarks of TNSM's chief Sufi Mohammad that the "Qazis' courts verdicts can't be challenged in the Supreme Court." Also front-paged were reports that the "Supreme Court sought a report from the Balochistan police about the alleged incident of burying alive of five women in the province last year." All dailies reported that "two helicopters of NATO forces violated the airspace of Pakistan as they flew over Torkham."

Almost all major newspapers ran editorials on the implementation of the "Nizam-i-Adl Regulation" and discussed its far-reaching impact on the Pakistani social fabric. Expressing concern over the continuous presence of militants in Swat, the center-left national daily, "Dawn," noted that the "obvious worry is that if the militants remain armed to the teeth and roam freely in public, they will be able to browbeat the government into accepting their position in any dispute." Toeing the line, the Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," warned that the "people will have to accept Sharia (Islamic laws) now or die at the hands of the Taliban." On the contrary, the second-largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," opined that "we must make it clear to the U.S. that democracy reigns supreme here and that the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation poses no threat to it." End Summary.

News Stories

"Bomber Sows Terror In Charsadda; 16 Killed" "Dawn" (04/16)

"Nine police personnel, including a DSP and an SHO, and seven passers-by were killed while 10 others were injured after a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into a police check-post in Charsadda on Wednesday evening."

"Nizam-e-Adl Will Be Reviewed If Peace Not Restored" "Daily Times" (04/16)

"The government may review the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009 if peace is not restored in Swat, President Asif Ali Zardari said on Wednesday, while addressing the Pakistani community in Tokyo."

"Qazis' Verdict Can't Be Challenged In SC" "The News" (04/16)

"Tanzeem Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) Chief Maulana Sufi Muhammad on Wednesday said the Qazi courts would dispose of cases in line with Shariah and their verdicts could not be challenged in the high court or the Supreme Court, but a Darul Qaza would be set up at the divisional level as a final court."

"SC Seeks Report On Women Buried Alive" "Dawn" (04/16)

"The Supreme Court sought on Wednesday a report from the Balochistan Police Chief about the alleged incident of burying alive of five women in the province last year."

"NATO Choppers Violate Pak Air Space" "The Nation" (04/16)

"Two helicopters of NATO forces on Wednesday violated the air space of Pakistan as they flew over Torkham, a town of Pakistan near Pak-Afghan border, sources disclosed.... However, the ISPR said that the NATO forces formally have apologized for the incident."

"U.S., Pakistan Struggle To Soften Aid Conditions" "Dawn" (04/16)

"The United States and Pakistan are working quietly to remove their differences on the conditions attached to expected U.S. aid as a high-level American delegation leaves for Tokyo to participate in an international donors' conference. The conference, scheduled on Friday, is expected to raise up to \$6 billion to help Pakistan rebuild its ailing economy."

"Pakistan Can Lead The Way: Qureshi Asks FoP To Make Pakistan A Role Model" "The News" (04/16)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Tokyo on Wednesday urged the Friends of Pakistan (FoP) countries to join hands in making Pakistan, which is contributing as a frontline state in the war against terrorism, a role model for the world."

"FATA Too Violent To Benefit From U.S. Aid: Kerry" "Dawn" (04/16)

"Pakistan's tribal areas are too ungovernable and too violent to benefit from U.S. financial assistance, says Senator John Kerry, reminding Islamabad that only security could bring prosperity to the region. The U.S. Senator, who is trying to push an annual \$1.5 billion increase in aid to Pakistan, visited the tribal areas earlier this week after a series of high level meetings with senior officials in Islamabad."

"Taliban To Take 'Struggle' To New Areas" "Dawn" (04/16)

"Pakistani Taliban will not lay down their arms in a northwestern valley as part of a deal that included the introduction of Sharia law but will take their 'struggle' to new areas, a militant spokesman said on Wednesday."

"Sharia Law Enforced In Malakand" "Dawn" (04/16)

"The NWFP governor promulgated on Wednesday the Sharia Nizam-i-Adl Regulation of 2009, providing for appointment of Qazis and restoration of the executive magistracy system in the Malakand division and Kohistan."

"Militants Still Control Several Areas Of Buner" "The News" (04/16)

"The enforcement of Nizam-e-Adl Regulation, the ostensible demand of Swat-based militants, had no positive impact on Buner where militants continued to hold control of several areas, carry out armed patrol and keep up a campaign for recruiting fighters, locals said Wednesday."

"The Reality About Nizam-e-Adl Regulation" "The News" (04/16)

"Nizam-e-Adl Regulation (NAR) 2009 envisages no role whatsoever for Swat Taliban or Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) in the running of the newly introduced justice system. Contrary to the general perception that Swat has been surrendered to Taliban and that different sects of the religion and minorities would be at the receiving end under the new dispensation, the NAR 2009 clearly protects all Muslim sects and minorities from being tried under laws that do not match their respective faith."

"Pressure Did Not Work In Swat" "The News" (04/16)

"There has been tremendous pressure from Washington on President Asif Ali Zardari and ANP President Asfandiyar Wali not to enforce Nizam-e-Adl Regulation in Swat but the two did not oblige the former for the mere reason that there was no other option available with anyone to bring peace in the valley."

"Singh Rules Out Peace Talks Revival" "The News" (04/16)

"Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday ruled out resumption of talks with Pakistan as long as 'it allows terrorists to use its territory against India and shows sincerity' in bringing the perpetrators of Mumbai attacks to justice."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Worrying Uncertainties," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"The obvious worry is that if the militants remain armed to the teeth and roam freely in public, they will be able to browbeat the government into accepting their position in any dispute. The second problem is of time frames. When President Zardari dithered over enforcing the Nizam-i-Adl, the militants cried foul and demanded its immediate implementation. But no such immediacy seems to concern Sufi Mohammad when it comes to the militants holding up their end of the bargain. Without a definite timeline to leave the public arena, the fear is that it is the militants who will now be engaging in delaying tactics."

"Sharia Law And Its Saintly Nepotism," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/16)

"The people will have to accept Sharia now or die at the hands of the Taliban. And in the process the Taliban will take their wealth and their women as all such marauders have done in history."

"Nizam-i-Adl Regulation: We Do Not Need U.S. Dictation At All," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (04/16)

"What kind of system Pakistan has is up to us to decide, not the U.S.... We must make it clear to the U.S. that democracy reigns supreme here and that the Nizam-i-Adl regulation poses no threat to it. We have to run the system ourselves; and fulfill the demands of national security on our own."

"The Capitulation Continues," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"The spineless display by the provincial government and parliament means the militants are more confident than ever. They have stated they will be 'touring' districts of Malakand and neighboring Buner to ensure peace is kept. This is rather ominous given that the militants have so far brought with them nothing but violence and suffering. The ban placed on the display of arms in public means nothing, given that this can of course be ended at any time. There has been no mention of de-weaponization or a surrender of guns, which could perhaps bring longer-term peace in the area...."

"Nizam-i-Adl Regulation: The Need For Caution," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (04/16)

"Although the Pakistani leadership gave a detailed briefing to Senator Kerry on the Nizam-i-Adl regulation and how it was imperative for peace in the area, the U.S. administration feels that such deals lead to an acceptance of extremists' demands and would provide safe havens to them.... We hope that both parties to the deal would honor their words and keep the promises made to ensure peace in the area."

"Concerns About Swat," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/16)

"There is a need on the part of the TTP and TNSM also not to say or do anything that adds to the problems the country is facing. While Islamabad has carried out its part of the Swat accord, it is for the militants now to fulfill their obligations in letter and spirit...."

"Taliban In Punjab," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (04/16)

"After the signing of the peace deal the residents of the Malakand Division have been heaving a sigh of relief and the public life is returning to normalcy in the area. The U.S. and its allies should adopt the policy of wait and see and peace be given a chance in Swat and other areas. It is in the interest of Pakistan and its people that the peace deal should be welcomed."

"Speedy Justice Is Demand Of Everyone," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (04/16)

"Despite understandable criticism by some Western-sponsored and Western-styled circles and the United States, the promulgation of Nizam-e-Adl Regulation in Malakand Division has had a soothing effect on the overall security situation and things have started settling down with remarkable pace. The Qazi courts have started working with full authority.... The objective is to ensure inexpensive and speedy justice and there is absolutely nothing wrong if this objective is achieved through Qazi courts in Swat."

"Peace Accord: Exercise Patience," editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (04/16)

"The victorious religious leaders in Malakand division now must take the responsibility to remove the impression of being extremists, as no religious service can be done by using force."

"Start Of The victory March?," an op-ed by Kamila Hyat in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"It seems more and more apparent that the Taliban are now winning. There is evidence of this everywhere; the distant sound of triumphant bugles - or whatever instruments the extremist use to mark victory--can sometimes be heard in the distance if we cock our ears. From Swat, where the ANP 'deal' with the men of Maulana Fazlullah has meant they have effectively won in the area, the Taliban have fanned out to neighboring Buner and Dir.... It seems impossible to believe the events were not carefully contrived and put into place by experts."

"Nizam-e-Adl In Swat," an op-ed by Zafar Hilaly in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"It matters not that Adl is good or bad, barbaric or Islamic; or that court judgments will be super-quick or delayed; or whether presiding officials are called Qazis or Justices. What matters is that the agreement was extracted by force and specifically by the slaughter, amputations, abductions, rape and terrorizing of innocent citizens."

"Thrown To The Wolves For Peace," an op-ed by Saba Gul Khattak in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"One-third of the NWFP has been handed to the Taliban on a platter.... A stunning majority, representing almost all major political parties in the national Parliament, hastily approved, without debate, the regulation that denies basic human rights to the people.... The implementation of the Nizam-e-Adl brings into question the relevance of the MNAs and MPAs from Malakand Division. Who do these MPAs and MNAs represent when the entire government accepts Sufi Mohammad and Fazlullah as the "true" representatives of the people?"

"What Is To Be Done?," an op-ed by Dr. Tariq Rahman in the

Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"Pakistanis understand the choice that is being made for them when they do not oppose the Taliban. They should also know that all scientific growth and technological and industrial development will come to a full stop if we strangle the freedom of thought.... But if we allow the militants to take over we will create a silent, frightened, cowardly society which will be impossible to live in.... The fact is that the militants are jeopardizing our Pakistani way of life, causing anarchy, bloodshed and cruelty. They are our enemies. As it happens they are also America's enemies but this does not mean we are fighting them because of America alone. However, if our open alliance with the U.S. is alienating the Pakistani people then it is in our interest not to appear beholden to President Obama's overtures."

"We Agree With Admiral Mullen For A Change," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (04/16)

"Perhaps for the first time the U.S. Military Chief has made a statement reflective of the ground realities in Afghanistan. As Washington is preparing to send additional troops to Afghanistan in what is being called 'surge,' Admiral Mike Mullen has said in an interview that violence in Afghanistan was set to rise in coming months.... In our view, mere expression of apprehension was not enough on the part of the U.S. Military Chief and he should advise his Government to take actions to rectify the situation. Like other people, Afghans too are entitled to decide their own future and the foreign occupation forces should vacate the country, which is the only way out of the quagmire that the West is in these days."

"Endgame For NATO?," an op-ed by Zafar Masud in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"That NATO has outlived its utility and that its resuscitation will serve only American efforts to legitimize the occupation of Afghanistan, is clearly understood by everyone in Europe.... While there is unspoken comprehension of the real U.S. intentions in Afghanistan, not everyone in Europe agrees that all Afghans who want the Americans out of their country are necessarily the Taliban or Taliban sympathizers."

"No To Conditional Assistance, But Economic Objectives Should Be Achieved," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (04/16)

"Pakistan's geo-strategic position is very critical, therefore it must take advantage of this situation, and repulse the U.S. attempt of linking unnecessary conditions with the aid package. Time has come for Pakistan to urge the U.S. administration to provide access to the U.S. market and special tariff package for Pakistani commodities."

"... Then Say Goodbye To America," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (04/16)

"No Pakistani ruler can be so shameless as to blindly implement whatever the U.S. says or to shape the country's policies according to American wishes. The Pakistani nation would not care a fig for [foreign/U.S.] assistance which threatens to put a yoke around its neck."

"The Issue Of Economic Aid And Some Ground Realities," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (04/16)

"It is our leadership's job to decide how the [U.S.] assistance is used. The nation was deprived of democratic leadership for a long time, but we can now rightly expect that the government will use the new foreign assistance only for the purpose it is intended."

"Friends Of Pakistan Conference In Tokyo," an editorial in Hyderabad based liberal and independent Sindhi Daily "Ibrat" (Cir. 80,000) (04/16)

"The Friends of Pakistan Conference is being held today in Tokyo, and \$4 billion assistance is anticipated from the moot. We believe

that if the proposed aid package of the Friends of Pakistan is rightly utilized for the socio-economic uplift of the poor masses, and they are made feel that their uplift is on the agenda, a huge difference can be made."

"All Forces Must Sit Together To Find Way Out Of Balochistan Quagmire," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (04/16)

"The assassination of three Baloch leaders and the unleashing of riots and disorder in Balochistan, following release of a UN official John Solecki, President Zardari's announcement of an aid package for Balochistan, and signing of Pak-Iran gas pipeline project bear far-reaching consequences. It seems that some elements are working on a foreign agenda to destabilize Pakistan in the garb of public agitation. In this state of affairs there is no room for political conflicts, allegations and taking advantage of others mistakes."
Patterson